



Press Release

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The Trustees of Reservations Complete Project to Restore the Damde Meadows Salt Marsh in Hingham

Hingham. A salt marsh farmed for salt meadow grass in colonial times and later converted to a freshwater hayfield is having a comeback as a result of a restoration project completed this month by The Trustees of Reservations. Wetlands restoration advocates gathered at mid-day to dedicate the Damde Meadows Salt Marsh Restoration Project at World's End Reservation, owned by the non-profit conservation organization.

"With the help of our conservation partners, we've turned the clock back some 300 years to a time when tidal waters sustained a vibrant New England salt marsh at World's End," said Andy Kendall, Executive Director of The Trustees of Reservations. "In the years to come, Damde Meadows will be a haven for wildlife and a wonderful educational resource for our visitors. The project highlights the power and synergy that result from collaboration among government agencies, conservation organizations, and corporate partners. Together, we're going to conserve the best of the Massachusetts landscape for future generations to enjoy."

Damde Meadows originally was a salt marsh extending east-west from Hingham Harbor to the Weir River, separating Cushing's Neck from Planter's Hill and World's End. In the 1600's, settlers constructed two earthen and stone dams, one at the Weir River side and one at Martin's Cove, in order to "reclaim ... the 'Damde Meddowes' ... from the sea".

The \$185,500 project involved installing two 4-foot by 8-foot concrete box culverts, sized to approximate unrestricted, natural tidal flow. The culverts replaced a failing drainpipe that extended below the two dikes and which connected Damde Meadows with Martin's Cove. One of these dikes

was constructed in the 1880's to improve public access to the World's End peninsula in Hingham Bay, part of Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the World's End landscape.

The two new culverts are designed to allow enough water to flood the approximately 18-acre site and restore the salt marsh, while allowing the large ponded area to drain at low tide. Ecologists predict that most of the area will be recolonized by salt marsh vegetation. The higher tides accommodated by the new culverts will reach deep into the marsh, stressing and eventually killing off much of the invasive *Phragmites australis* (common reed). Areas now dominated by *Phragmites* are expected to gradually develop into a high marsh plant community, dominated by spike grass, black grass, and salt hay.

Secretary of Environmental Affairs Ellen Roy Herzfelder praised The Trustees for choosing to restore the salt marsh. "Caring for our wetlands is critical to the environmental and economic health of the coastal communities that all New Englanders treasure. By joining forces with our many public and private partners, as we have done for the Damde Meadows Salt Marsh Restoration Project, we can restore a significant part of our wetland heritage and maintain it for future generations."

A diverse array of local, state, federal, and private partners carried the project through the various stages of site evaluation, project design, permitting, and construction. The Trustees sponsored and managed the project, and provided part of the funding. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provided planning, design and oversight, as well as financial assistance through the Wetlands Reserve Program. The Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership played a key role in fulfilling a cost-share requirement for one of the federal grants, through the donation of technical services and funds by ENSR International and New England Development. The National Marine Fisheries Service and EPA New England provided ongoing technical input. The Gulf of Maine Council, Fish America Foundation, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation all provided project funding through NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) partnership grants. Northern Construction Services, from Weymouth, served as the contractor for the project construction.

Speaking at the event, Garry Hollands of ENSR International, in Westford, observed that the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership (CWRP) creates an opportunity for the private sector, the government regulatory sector, and environmental organizations to work together for a common cause, breaking down the "good guy - bad guy" paradigm. "The CWRP is an effective vehicle to rally society's resources to restore wetlands."

The Damde Meadows restoration provides The Trustees with an exciting opportunity to involve students in learning about salt marsh ecosystems. Students from Curry College in Milton, Massachusetts, have already assessed the initial site conditions. The Trustees will continue to involve high school and college students in the monitoring of the wetland as tidal flow gradually restores the area to its natural condition. The staff will also work with local teachers to use Damde

Meadows for field studies. These educational goals stem from the organization's belief that re-connecting people to the land is one of the most effective ways to foster the protection of the Massachusetts landscape. *END*